IN THE SPECIFICATION

Please replace paragraph 15 with the following:

The wheel end assemblies 22 each include a gear set 24 that is driven by one of the axle shafts 20, and which in turn drives a vehicle wheel 26. The gear sets 24 can be planetary, helical, or any other type of wheel end gear set known in the art. The gear sets 24 provide for increased output torque at the vehicle wheels 26 for heavy-duty vehicle applications.

Please replace paragraph 17 with the following:

The axle 28 and gear 30 housings are partially filled with a lubricating fluid to ensure that the gear sets 24, differential assembly 18, and associated bearings are protected from overheating and wear. The drive axle assembly 10 maintains a dual fluid level within the axle 28 and gear 30 housings, i.e. a first predetermined fluid level 32 is maintained in the axle housing 28 and a second predetermined fluid level 34 is maintained in the gear housings 30. A pumping mechanism 36 is driven by the axle shafts 20 to move the lubricating fluid from a center section of the axle housing 28 to the gear housings 30. The lubricating fluid is preferably an oil-based fluid, however, other lubricating fluids known in the art could also be used.

Please replace paragraph 18 with the following:

The pumping mechanism 36 is shown in greater detail in Figures 2 and 3. The pumping mechanism 36 preferably comprises an impeller 38 that is mounted for rotation with the respective axle shaft 20. The impeller 38 is positioned near an end 40 of the axle housing 28

and adjacent to the gear housing 30. Preferably, an impeller housing 42 is positioned between the axle housing 28 and the gear housing 30 and defines a fluid cavity 44.

Please replace paragraph 20 with the following:

The axle shaft 20 drives the impeller 38, which moves the fluid from the center section of the axle housing 28 into the fluid cavity 44, producing a fluid dam. As fluid continues to flow from the lower level center section of the axle housing 28 and into the fluid cavity 44, the fluid level also continues to rise within the fluid cavity 44 until the fluid passes through the fluid port 46. Preferably, the fluid port 46 is positioned at the desired second predetermined fluid level 34 for the gear housing 30. An overflow or return port 56 is also formed in the impeller housing 42 or gear housing 30 at a vertically higher position than the fluid port 46. If the fluid in the gear housing 30 rises above the second predetermined ~~second~~ fluid level 34, fluid will flow out of the overflow port 56 and back into the axle housing 28.

Please replace paragraph 21 with the following:

The desired flow rate can be tailored by varying the wall clearance between the impeller 38 and the wall 48 of the impeller housing 42. In other words, the flow rate can be varied by adjusting the lateral position of the impeller 38 along the axle shaft 20 relative to the wall 48. The flow rate could also be varied by increasing or decreasing the size of the fluid port 46 and/or the overflow or return port 56 back to the axle housing 28.

Please replace paragraph 24 with the following:

The disc 70 has a first radially extending edge 72 and a second radially extending edge 74. The first and second radially extending edges 72, 74 are laterally spaced apart from each other along the external circumferential surface 68 of the tube portion 60 to define a fluid path or gap 76. This configuration is achieved by providing a radial cut on the disc 70 from the inner circumference 72 to an outer circumference 78. The ~~stamped~~ disc 70 is then stretched in a lateral direction, parallel to the axle shaft 20, such that the first and second radially extending edges 72, 74 are spaced apart from each other. The disc 70 is then welded to the tube portion 60. Fluid flows from the axle housing 28 through the fluid gap 76 and into the fluid cavity 44 of the impeller housing 42.